DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 171 675 SP 014 298

AUTHOR Abram, Marie J.; And Others
TITLE Research Activities Within the Professional Development Center Network.
PUB DATE 79
NOTE 17p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (Chicago, Illinois, February 27-March 2, 1979) ; Best copy available

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS College High School Cooperation; Educational Improvement; *Educational Research; *Inservice Teacher Education; Interinstitutional Cooperation; Program Evaluation; *Research Design; State Aid; *Teacher Workshops

ABSTRACT

A cooperative program to improve education in the public schools involving the combined resources of the state department of education, a state university, and the local school districts is described. This Professional Development Center Network (PDC) conducts research to produce decision-making information to upgrade inservice programs in the schools in conjunction with individual school districts. The goal of this project is to facilitate the increased use of research within the local public schools and to strengthen the bonding between the local school districts and the local state-supported university. Emphasis is placed upon helping the individual public schools to assess their needs and to conduct their own research projects. A PDC team cooperates with each local school district in identifying research areas and designing the project. The PDC team is also responsible for computerizing, analyzing, interpreting, and reporting data provided by the school. Sample projects conducted by this cooperative program are briefly outlined. Evaluation instruments used by the schools to obtain needs data are appended. (JD)

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Research Activities Within The Professional Development Center Network

Presented by

Marie J. Abram, Western Kentucky University;

Robert A. Cobb, Western Kentucky University;

and

Donald Van Fleet, Kentucky State Department of Education

Paper presented at the Case Studies section

of 1979 Annual meeting of

the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education.

February 27 - March 2

Chicago, Illinois

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RESEARCH ACTIVITIES WITHIN THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CENTER NETWORK (PDC)

The Professional Development Center Network (PDC) is a cooperative effort that combines resources from the Kentucky Department of Education, the College of Education at Western Kentucky University, and 21 school districts in south central Kentucky to provide inservice education and research to the public schools. For the first two years of its operation the PDC provided only inservice. Beginning this year it is providing research as well as inservice.

The research conducted by the PDC can be divided into two sets of activities. First, the PDC conducts research to produce decision making information to continually upgrade its inservice programs. Second, the PDC conducts research in conjunction with individual school districts through PREPS. Each of these research activities will be discussed seperately.

Non-PREPS Research Within the PDC

From its inception the PDC Director has built research into the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the inservice activities of the PDC. A needs assessment has always been standard operating procedure for determining the desires of participants prior to planning and conducting inservice programs. The needs assessment instrument has undergone refinement over the years in an effort to upgrade the decision making information that is obtained. This years' needs assessment will utilize a discrepancy model format that asks respondents to respond twice to each proposed inservice topic; once in terms of present level of knowledge and once in terms of their concern.

Locating qualified consultants has also been looked at from a problem solving/research point of view. The PDC is presently circulating an instrument throughout Kentucky that asks respondents to list their areas of expertise. This data will be computerized for easy access to individuals by subject area.

Also from the beginning, the PDC Director has asked inservice participants to evaluate the workshops they have attended. This information has routinely been shared with the consultant as well as used to revise on-going workshops and plan future offerings.

An example of an evaluation conducted by the PDC Network can be found on page 31 of the handout (in the appendix). This particular evaluation form was used to evaluate a Common In-Service Day conducted jointly by about half of the participating school districts. The Common In-Service Day was structured so that each participating district would have at least one inservice per district. This required that teachers travel rather widely among the school districts. The planners of the day were concerned about how teachers would feel about this traveling. As a result, the evaluation probed travel arrangements as well as the usual areas of content, teaching process, and physical comfort.

In an effort to reduce the halo effect, the evaluation was circulated two weeks after the workshops were conducted. Sixty-seven percent of the evaluation forms were returned. The data was disseminated by way of two separate research reports. The first was a technical report giving the percent of positive responses to each question and interpreting the responses as indicating strengths or weaknesses of the programs. This technical report was distributed to administrative personnel associated with the planning and implementation of the day. The second report can be seen on page 34 of the handout (in the appendix). This is a less-technical single-page report that briefly summarizes the major findings. This second report was disseminated to workshop participants.

PREPS Research

Beginning this year the PDC Network is providing research capabilities to its member school districts through the concept of PREPS. Prior to PREPS, only the largest and best funded school districts could afford the personnel and hardware necessary to do research on their own. Now, through PREPS, each

district shares the specialized expertise and the hardware needed to conduct research. With the growing need for accountability PREPS has been well received in the local school districts.

PREPS is funded by Title IV-C monies of the individual school districts, a grant from the State Department of Education, and by in-kind contributions from the College of Education at Western Kentucky University. With these monies PREPS has assembled a research team of seven members, two of which have full-time responsibilities for the on-going research activities in the public schools. The remaining five members of the research team serve in an advisory or support capacity.

The Kentucky Department of Education has contributed approximately half of the funding needed to operationalize this years' PREPS projects. The State Department views PREPS as a pilot project that may be expanded state-wide at a later time. Through PREPS the State Department hopes to facilitate the increased use of research within the local public school as well as strengthen the bonding between the local school districts and the local state supported university.

PREPS is involved in doing research WITH the public schools. WITH is an important word and needs to be underscored. PREPS does not do research FOR or TO the schools -- rather it works WITH them to help them conduct their own research projects. This concept has been borrowed from Mississippi State University who began doing similar research WITH a consortium of public schools in their area.

PREPS has been designed so that each local school district who chooses will conduct one research project during the present school year. In addition, one district-wide research project is also being conducted. To operationalize the 20 research projects planned for this year the PREPS research team utilizes a seven step model. The steps are as follows:

1 - Identification of a needed research area. In this step the PREPS research team meets with local school district personnel to identify possible research areas and to discuss data requirements for each of the potential studies under consideration.

2 - Asking specific research questions(s) and design of the research. In this step the PREPS research team designs the research project with the advice and consent of the local school district personnel.

3 - Approval of the research design by the school district Superintendent or his designee. This step allows the local district to maintain control over the specific research problems and amount of resources that must be allocated to the data collection.

4 - Data collection. This step is the sole responsibility of the local school district. The PREPS research team will design whatever forms and data collection procedures may be necessary but it remains with the local district to collect and code the data.

5 - Computerizing, analyzing, interpreting, and reporting the data. This step is the sole responsibility of the PREPS research team who will see that the data submitted by each local district is properly analyzed and written into a report useful to the local school district.

6 - Reporting the results of the study. Two separate but complementary reports are planned for each PREPS Project. A technical report will be disseminated to the Superintendent and other interested personnel at the local school district level. If the Superintendent desires, the technical report will also be submitted to ERIC. In addition, an oral summary of the technical report will be made to the administration of the local school district. A less technical report is also planned for wider dissemination throughout the local school district.

7 - A sharing conference will be held in mid-June at which time each Superintendent will be given an opportunity to report his study to the rest of the Commission members. This conference is seen as a way of sharing the results of the individual studies as well as a means of providing an educational opportunity to discuss research methodology and potential research areas.

Sample PREPS Projects

The research projects planned for the 1978-79 school year cover a variety of topical areas and use a wide variety of research methodologies. Nineteen research projects are planned, one in each of the school districts asking for a research project. One district-wide research project is also planned. Of the 20 research projects now planned, 12 will utilize a survey design, 8 are correlational or ex post facto studies, and two are quasi-experimental studies. Studies may fall into more than one research classification as frequently a study will utilize several research models to more thoroughly study the chosen research area. The actual topic area of the studies cover a wide variety of educational concerns and are described in the titles as listed on page 28 of the handout (in the appendix).

Four projects will be briefly described to give the flavor of the research being conducted this year through PREPS.

1. BUTLER COUNTY - A 53-item survey was circulated to parents of all children in the Butler County School System. Fifty of the items were in the form of a short statement that required a Likert-type response. Three items were open-ended and asked parents to list the strongest and weakest features of the school system and solicited their suggestions for improvement. The questionnaires were distributed in January and are presently being put on

the computer for analysis. The study should give the Butler County schools a good indication of how parents feel about their schools. The data will be analyzed by individual school and by grade level.

2. ALLEN COUNTY - Allen County chose to evaluate an innovative math program that had been used for two years in the eighth grade and is presently being used in one section of the seventh grade. The evaluation was in terms of student learning gain over and above what might be expected in a standard math program and in terms of students' attitude toward the innovative teaching method. This was the first PREPS study to be completed. The results showed a positive gain by eighth grade students enrolled in the innovative math program for the full year and by the seventh grade students enrolled in the program for half a year. The learning gain in both instances fell short of statistical significance. Student attitudes were consistently positive. Moreover, it was noted that the most positive responses came from students who had previously done poorly in math programs.

3. DAVIESS COUNTY - Daviess County is presently collecting data that will evaluate a four week summer school operated for students who were one or more grades behind their expected achievement level. The evaluation will be in terms of both norm and criterion referenced tests. Both immediate and long-term learning will be evaluated. The Daviess County administration believes the summer program generated considerable excitement in both students and teachers by means of the personal attention it gave to the specific needs of the students and to the hospitable climate it created by its informal atmosphere. The Daviess County school system hopes the evaluation will substantiate expenditure of the resources used in this program.

4. The District-wide Project, CBAM - Data will be collected in all participating school districts using the Concerns Based Adoption Model (CBAM) instrument

developed at the University of Texas under funding of NIE. CBAM measures where an individual is on a seven-step change model. The instrument is being circulated using the newly mandated Kentucky Educational Improvement Act as the innovation against which the individual will be assessing his/her level of change. The data will be analyzed in terms of where on the seven-step change model different groups of certified personnel presently are so that inservice programs related to this mandated act can be designed to meet the groups' needs. At this time, data has been returned from most of the school districts and is in the process of being placed on the computer.

Special Considerations for Implementation of PREPS Research

PREPS is unique in that research personnel based at a local university are employed to design and implement research in cooperation WITH local school districts. This arrangement leads to some unique management problems that you should be aware of if you are considering implementing a PREPS-like program in your area. The three major considerations are:

1. The need for good communication between the local school systems and the PREPS research team.

   Most of the public schools involved in PREPS have not been involved prior to this time in formal research and evaluation activities. Local personnel are very aware of local problems. The PREPS research team is heavily involved in research but comes to the local district without an indepth knowledge of local problems. Thus, sharing of information and building of trust becomes an important linkage that must be developed during the initial process of designing research. The PREPS research team feels that this communication has now been established in all participating districts. However, establishing this linkage took more time than was originally planned and we call it to your attention as a factor to consider when implementing cooperative research projects.

2. Time constraints necessitated by doing 21 research projects in one school year.

During this first year, all PREPS research projects have been designed to be completed within the school year. Studies were occasionally designed so that a second step could be taken next year. In addition, time constraints were experienced because of the travel time necessary for the PREPS research team to travel to all school districts.

3. The unequal resources available at the local level.

The individual school districts buy into PREPS through their Title IV-C monies. A sliding scale is used so that the costs are equitably distributed among members. This initial fee gives them the use of the PREPS research team and computer facilities available at Western. However, under the PREPS system each school district also collects its own data which necessitates the assignment of personnel and other resources that may be more difficult for some school districts to allocate than for others.

Other considerations are:

4. The sudden influx of large amounts of data to be keypunched and analyzed.
5. The need for thorough and quick computerized searches of the literature.
6. Effective use of the data for decision making within a school district.
7. A procedure of sharing the results and methodology of a study with sister districts.

In closing, it can be said that this has been an exciting and busy year for the PDC Network staff and for the individual school districts involved in PREPS. We have one of the 21 projects completed at this time and are looking forward to the results of the other twenty.

APPENDIX

PDC Network

Evaluation of Common In-Service Day

I. General Information

Please answer all of the questions in this section. Information will be used to improve future in-service activities. Data will be reported by group only and not by individual. Thank you.

a. Workshop attended: _____

b. School District Employed by: _____

c. Present position [circle grade level(s) taught]:

1. ____Teacher a. ____Elementary - 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

b. ____Jr. High/Middle School - 6 7 8 9

c. ____High School - 9 10 11 12

2. ____Administrator

3. ____Counselor

4. ____Other: _____

d. Subject(s) taught: _____

_____

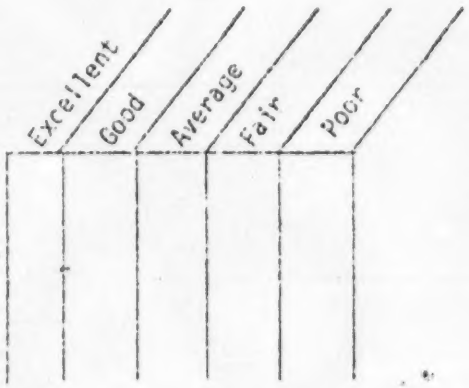
e. Round-trip mileage to and from workshop: _____

f. Did you drive your car? ____No ____Yes

If yes, how many people rode with you? _____

II. Physical Environment Information

Please rate the workshop in terms of the following.



1. Room size
2. Room temperature
3. Seating arrangements
4. Coffee breaks

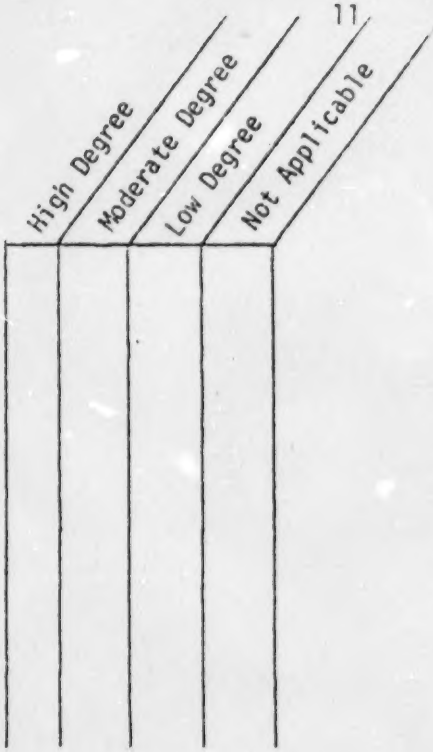
Comments: _____

_____

11

III. Content Information

Please rate the workshop in terms of the following:



a. Degree to which objectives of workshop were made clear to me.

b. Degree to which objectives were met.

c. Degree to which objectives were appropriate to your grade level.

d. Degree to which ideas and materials presented were new to you.

e. Degree to which you plan to put materials and ideas into use in classroom this year.

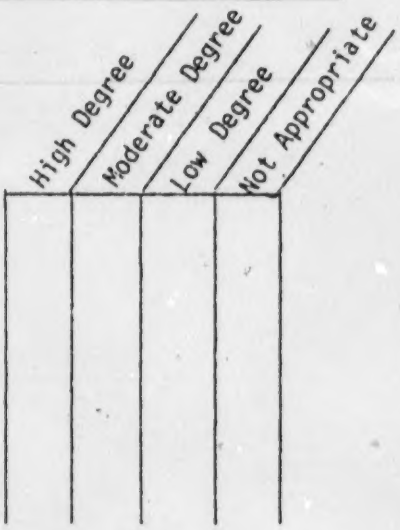
f. Degree to which consultant was well informed in area.

Comments: _____

_____

IV. Process Information

Please rate the workshop in terms of the following:



a. Degree to which consultant was well organized.

b. Degree to which handouts were useful.

c. Degree to which adequate time was set aside for discussion/questioning.

d. Degree to which I was allowed to share my techniques and materials with other participants.

Comments: _____

_____

V. Overall Information

a. What did you like best about the workshop?

_____

_____

V. Continued

b. What did you like least about the workshop?

_____

_____

c. Suggestions for improvement:

_____

_____

d. What is your overall impression of holding a Common In-Service Day?

_____

_____

e. Was there another workshop you wanted to attend? ____No ____Yes

1. Which workshop? _____

_____

2. Why did you choose this workshop? _____

_____

f. Assuming you rated this workshop either excellent or good, do you believe the drive to and from the workshop was worth while?

_____

_____

SUMMARY OF THE COMMON IN-SERVICE DAY

Thank you for your help in evaluating the Common In-Service Day held on October 5, 1978. Results of the evaluation show:

- 88.9% of the participants were classroom teachers. The other 11.1% were a mixture of administrators (5.6%), librarians (3.2%), and counselors (2.3%).

- The overall impression of the Day was positive with 81% giving favorable responses when asked their overall impression.

- Four questions were directed to evaluating the physical environment. The most frequent response to each of the four questions was positive. The question receiving the most negative responses was for seating arrangements (7% reporting this poor and 10% reporting this fair).

- The content of the workshops was evaluated with six questions. The most frequent response to each of the six questions was positive. The highest number of negative responses were to the questions: "to what degree were the ideas and materials presented new to you" (29% negative responses) and "to what degree do you plan to put the materials and ideas into use in your classroom this year" (24% negative responses).

- The teaching process used in the workshops was evaluated with four questions. Again, the most frequent response was positive for each of the four questions. The question receiving the most negative response was, "degree to which I was allowed to share my techniques and materials with other participants" (30% negative responses).

- Participants generally spent one hour of their In-Service Day in travel.

- Most participants drove by themselves or came with one other person.

- 81% of the participants felt the one hour drive was worth the In-Service training received.

This evaluation will be used to improve future workshops sponsored by the PDC Network. The four areas of weakness reported above will be given special emphasis in future workshop planning.

The candid responses to the questions on the evaluation were much appreciated.

Titles of 1978-79
PREPS Research Projects

School District	PREPS Project Title
Allen County	Evaluation of an Innovative Junior High Math Program in Terms of Student Learning and Student Attitudes
Bowling Green	Evaluation of Non-Instructional Factors Associated with Learning in Title I Students
Butler County	Parents' View of the Butler County Schools
Caverna	Identification of Gifted and Talented Students by Teachers, Parents, Peers, and Self
Central City Independent	Identifying Variables Associated with First Grade Reading Gain
Daviess County	Evaluating a Summer School Program for Elementary Students Achieving Below Grade Average
Cloverport Independent	Parents' View of the Cloverport Independent Schools
Greenville Independent	A Longitudinal Study of Learning Achievement by Age of Entry Into First Grade
Glasgow Independent	A Survey of Immediate and Long-Term Dropouts and Their Parents Concerning Student Motivation and Future Educational Plans
LaRue County	Evaluating the Parent Reporting System
Logan County	A Survey of Recent Dropouts Concerning Motivation for Leaving School, Future Educational Plans, and Family History
McLean County	Factors Related to Lower Achieving Students Remaining in High School
Meade County	Survey of Teachers to Determine Instruction Provided in State Mandated Areas

Metcalfe County	Evaluation of Major Instructional Areas in Terms of Meeting the Needs of Students of all Acacemic Abilities
Monroe County	Variables Associated with Students Leaving School Prior to Graduation
Owensboro Independent	Evaluation of Learning Gain Associated with a CAI Program Given to ESAA Students
West Point Independent	Using the Delphi Technique to Design an Intake Form for Transfer Students
Jones-Jaggers Laboratory School	Evaluating Learning Gain Under Humanistic and Behavioristic Teaching Styles
College of Education	Surveying Administrators and Master Teachers Concerning the Minimal, Average, and Desired Competencies Needed by Classroom Teachers
Overall Project	Using the CBAM Instrument (Concerns Based Adoption Model) to Design Appropriate In-Service Programs Based on a Recent Kentucky Innovation